I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ELIZABETH PERATROVICH DAY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have come to the floor for a few moments this afternoon to recognize a woman of great distinction, a woman of valor, a woman by the name of Elizabeth Peratrovich, who championed civil rights for all Alaskans.

February 16, in Alaska, is a significant day. It is a day that the State of Alaska recognizes and observes Elizabeth Peratrovich Day. We have designated this day as early as 1988, but it is a time for us, as Alaskans, to reflect on the contributions of a pretty extraordinary Native woman, a Tlingit woman.

So I think it is important, and I have had an opportunity over the years to speak about Elizabeth Peratrovich. Senator SULLIVAN and I advanced a resolution recognizing Elizabeth Peratrovich's contributions when it comes to civil rights, and I think it is always important and timely to pay attention, to reflect on the legacies of those who have really worked to advance a more inclusive society and a more representative democracy.

Elizabeth Peratrovich carried the Tlingit name Kaaxgal.aat. I am attempting to do that well but certainly with respect to honor her name. She was of the Lukaax.adi clan. She was born on Independence Day. I think that is pretty fitting—born on Independence Day in Petersburg, AK, in 1911.

It was just right after that, right after the period that Elizabeth was born in Petersburg, that a group of Native people from across Southeast Alaska formed an organization called the Alaska Native Brotherhood, ANB. Two years later, the Alaska Native Sisterhood was formed, ANS. These are considered the oldest indigenous civil rights organizations in the world, coming out of Southeastern Alaska. ANB and ANS sought to advance equal opportunities for education, employment, housing; and they fought to secure Native civil rights.

So Elizabeth Peratrovich and her husband Roy became active in ANB and ANS in the forties. They moved to Juneau, our State's capital, in 1941. And their personal accounts of the discrimination that they encountered in Juneau, as Alaska Natives—you read the accounts, you read the stories, and it truly parallels the Jim Crow practices of the South.

But rather than be diminished, rather than be deterred, Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich were advocates, advocates against the adversity that they saw in their own communities. And it was through their work with ANB and ANS that they began advocating for an anti-discrimination bill in the territorial legislature.

And they pointed out the simple fact that Alaska Natives were paying taxes for a public school system, the same public school system that excluded their very own children. They pointed out that Alaska Native men were fighting in World War II and then, when they returned from the war, those Alaska Native veterans were denied rights that others enjoyed.

These very real, very immediate confrontations with discrimination drove their pursuit of equal rights for people all across the State of Alaska. So they worked on this anti-discrimination bill that was advancing through the legislature. It took a period of time. It was reintroduced in 1945, and in 1945 the measure passed the Alaska State House and moved on to the State senate.

And the debate on the senate floor was apparently quite animated and vocal throughout, but there was a territorial senator who denounced the efforts to desegregate. And he argued, and the words he quoted are ones that, as Alaskans, we see. The story told a lot. He said:

> Who are these people, barely out of savagery, who want to associate with us whites, with 5,000 years of recorded civilization behind us?

That is what he said on the senate floor.

At the end of the floor debate, at that time, it was not unusual to open up for comments from those who might be part of the public. I served in the Alaska State Legislature, and we have galleries that sit directly behind the chambers that are open to the chambers. And Elizabeth Peratrovich was sitting in the gallery listening to this extended and very offensive debate, quite honestly. But she rose, and she said:

> I would not have expected that I, who am barely out of savagery, would have to remind the gentlemen with 5,000 years of recorded civilization behind them of our Bill of Rights.

She stood gracefully. She stood firmly. She refuted clearly. And when asked if she thought that the bill would eliminate discrimination—so, again, a pretty interesting exchange between members of the senate and a member of the public in the gallery—and not just a member of the public in the gallery but a Native woman speaking up and challenging, forcefully and calmly but with a determination and a resolve.

And when she was asked if she thought the bill would eliminate discrimination, she replied:

> Do your laws against larceny and even murder prevent those crimes? No laws will eliminate crimes, but at least you as legislators can assert to the world that you recognize the evil of the present situation and speak your intent to help us overcome discrimination.

A pretty powerful reminder.

And there was a long period of silence after her remarks, and then a wave of applause went through the gallery and through the senate floor, including from some who had previously opposed the bill. Alaska's Governor at the time, Ernest Gruening, was the one to sign the anti-discrimination law, the Nation's first anti-discrimination law. He signed it into law on February 16, 1945. This was almost two decades before the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is pretty significant when you think about the contributions of this woman, Elizabeth Peratrovich, her husband Roy Peratrovich, and other Alaska Native leaders, at a time when discrimination was rampant throughout our country, that they had the courage and the strength and the determination to stand up for what is right.

She is an inspiration because she set the example that, when you see injustice, you speak out, you take action. And she also provided a great example for why we need to listen to the perspective of all voices, especially—especially—those who have been left out or were left behind.

Elizabeth Peratrovich is, as I mentioned, recognized in Alaska on this day. She has also been recognized nationally. In 2020, the U.S. Mint released these $1 coins commemorating Elizabeth Peratrovich, and 2020 was the 75th anniversary of when the anti-discrimination law of 1945 became law in our State.

On the one side of the coin, it features the portrait of Elizabeth, the name of the legislation that she advocated for, and the symbol of the Tlingit Raven moiety, of which she was a member. So it is, indeed, a significant reminder to each of us, Alaskan and non-Alaskan.

I think Elizabeth Peratrovich Day is also a timely reminder for those of us who serve here in the Senate. It may not be easy to take on some of these complicated issues, especially when partisanship is pulling Members back to their corners, but we know we can make good progress. We have done it. We certainly did it with the Violence Against Women reauthorization. We need to follow a process that allows us to get something done as opposed to simply sending messages.

So as Alaska celebrates Elizabeth Peratrovich Day, I would hope the Senate would look to her legacy, her example as an inspiration, as we seek unity, as we follow her example of treating fellow citizens with respect.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about Black History Month, which has its roots with Carter G. Woodson as early as 1915 and has been officially recognized since 1976.

Black History Month is an opportunity for celebration and discovery. It is a time to share the successes and